

SEPTEMBER 2025



Join Us for United Way's Reading Festival!

Saturday, November 15, 2025
9 AM - 12 PM
Mankato Family YMCA's Blue Gym

Don't miss United Way's annual Reading Festival, presented by Capstone. This free event is geared toward children PreK to Grade 3, but all children and families are welcome. Enjoy free Capstone books, snacks and children's activities by local organizations. This year's theme, "Win with Reading," is all about board games! Children must be accompanied by an adult.

🍂 Fall Family Scavenger Hunt 🍂

Head outside this fall for a family scavenger hunt! Look for a red leaf, an acorn, a pinecone, a feather, or something that crunches. You might spot a squirrel, a pumpkin, or trees changing colors. Spending time in nature helps kids relax, explore, and learn about the world around them. Doing it together builds family connections and creates lasting memories. Bring a bag to collect treasures, and enjoy the fresh air, laughter, and time with loved ones!

- Provided by Early Learning Department:
Mankato Area

Screens and Young Children *What Parents and Caregivers Should Know*

Screens are everywhere, including TVs, tablets, phones, and computers—and young children notice. It can be challenging to know how much screen time is healthy.

Experts recommend limiting screen use for the youngest children. For infants under 18 months, screen time should be avoided, except for video chatting with family. Toddlers and preschoolers can enjoy short, high-quality programs, such as educational shows or interactive apps, but no more than an hour a day is best. Most importantly, young children learn best through hands-on play, exploration and face-to-face interactions with caring adults.

Why does this matter? Too much screen time can interfere with sleep, physical activity, and early language development. When children watch alone, they miss chances to practice conversation, problem-solving, and social skills. On the other hand, when caregivers watch or play together with their child, screen time can be a chance to bond and learn—like naming objects on the screen or talking about the story.

Healthy screen habits include:

- Creating tech-free times, such as during meals or before bed.
- Choosing age-appropriate, educational, and ad-free content.
- Encouraging play outdoors, reading books, and active games as daily alternatives.
- Modeling balance by putting away your own devices during family time.

Screens are a part of modern life, but for children ages 0–5, they should play a small role. With thoughtful limits and shared experiences, parents and caregivers can help their children grow up healthy, curious, and connected.

COMMUNITY EVENTS



Read and Play - North Mankato Taylor Library: Mondays and Tuesdays 10:00 AM. No registration required. Ages 1 - 5. Educational play, games, stories, crafts, and more!

Open Playtime - St. Peter Community Center (Room 127): 9:00 - 11:00 AM on Monday, Wednesday, Friday. 5:00 - 7:00 PM on Tuesday and Thursday. Space for families and their children to play and connect. Ages birth to 6. No registration necessary. FREE.

Family Open Gym & Playtime - Center for Learning, Mankato: Thursdays 5:30 - 7:30 PM through Nov. 13; Fridays 9:30 - 11:30 AM through Nov. 14. Caregivers and their children birth to age 5 welcome! Family open gym and playtime is great for large muscle development. Riding toys, balls, and more will be available. FREE.

Newborn Discovery: Wednesdays (except holidays and winter break): 9:00 - 10:30 AM at **Center for Learning, Mankato**. An inclusive and informative class designed specifically for newborns aged 0-12 weeks and their parents or caregivers. Call ahead for free drop in child care for older siblings. FREE.

10/4 - Scarecrow Walk Entry - Bluff Park, North Mankato: 12:00 - 2:00 PM. Individuals, families, and businesses are invited to submit a scarecrow for the Scarecrow Walk at Party on the Prairie! Come to Benson Park to put your scarecrow together. **Materials NOT provided.** Prizes will be awarded for Best Individual/Family and Best Business. Registration preferred, but not required. Register by calling the North Mankato Taylor Library at 507-345-5120. FREE.

10/4: Party on the Prairie Fall Festival - Benson Park, North Mankato: 2:00 - 6:00 PM. Community event including a corn pit, scarecrow walk, face painting, bounce house, petting zoo, hayrides, fall food, drinks, and more! Bring your own lawn chair or blanket and enjoy live music starting at 2:00 PM. FREE.

10/25 - Trunk or Treat on Main Street - Waterville: 4:00 - 5:30 PM. You won't want to miss this hauntingly good time! FREE.

10/25 - Old Town Mankato Day of the Dead - Riverfront Park, Mankato: 11:00 AM - 5:00 PM. Enjoy a family cultural event in Old Town Mankato. Experience Mariach Estelar Mariachi Band, Zamora Folklore Dancers, Aztec Dancers, authentic & local food trucks, makers market, and free activities and treats for families, sponsored by Old Town Association and community businesses. FREE.

10/26 - Trick or Treat with the Mavericks - Meyers Field House (MSU): 2:00 - 4:00 PM. Exclusive Junior Maverick Club entry beginning at 1:30. Non-Junior Maverick Club members can register at msumavericks.com/clubs. Open to community members. FREE.

10/28 - Jack-O-Lantern Walk - Bluff Park, North Mankato: 6:00 - 9:00 PM. Bring your family and enjoy all the different Jack-O-Lanterns as well as fall food stand. No registration required unless you plan to submit a Jack-O-Lantern for the walk. FREE.

10/30 Trunk-or-Treat - Snell Motors: 2:00 - 6:00 PM. This family trunk-or-treating event will be held in the Snell Motors indoor showroom with trunks from local businesses. Bring your little goblins and ghouls for a safe and warm evening of trunk-or-treating, activities, candy, and more. FREE.

11/1 to 11/22 - Tiny Tot Time - St. Peter Community Center Gym: Saturdays, Nov. 1 - 22, 9:00 - 11:00 AM. Every week there is new activity. Fitness and fun. No registration necessary. Parents must be present with their child(ren). FREE.

11/15 - United Way Reading Festival - Mankato Family YMCA : 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM at Mankato Family YMCA Blue Gym. Expo-style event. The festival includes Capstone books, activities for Pre-K through 3rd-graders, and literacy information for parents. All children welcome. No registration necessary. FREE.